

O 011237Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9719
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL CHENNAI
AMCONSUL MUMBAI
AMCONSUL TORONTO
USEU BRUSSELS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
DIA WASHINGTON DC
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
SECDEF WASHDC
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 00374

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/IS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/CA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 44

Ref: A) Colombo 368 B) Colombo 361 C) Colombo 360 D) Colombo 357
E) Colombo 351 F) Colombo 342 G) Colombo 329 H) Colombo 321 I)
Colombo 320 J) Colombo 316 K) Colombo 310

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The U.N. now reports 3937 civilians killed and more than 9000 injured since January 20. 78% of those killed were in the safe zone. The U.N. has received reports that the Army has fired on escaping civilians. The planned food aid shipment to the safe zone has been delayed. UNHCR issued a press release welcoming GSL initiatives to release IDPs with special needs while pointing out areas that needed improvement. The GSL has agreed to establish IDP camps away from Vavuniya. UNHCR reports 57,412 new arrivals to GSL territory since November 2008. End Summary

"Safe Zone" Only in Name

12. (SBU) The U.N. reports that 3937 civilians have been killed and over 9000 injured from January 20 to March 31. Of those killed, 78% (3085 out of 3937) were in the GSL declared safe zone. The UN estimates that approximately 7600 of the 9000 wounded were in the safe zone as well. NGO local staff still resident in the Vanni reported aerial bombing within the safe zone on March 30. The staff reported that jets dropped 4-5 bombs on three separate occasions.

SLA Firing on Civilians
Escaping LTTE Territory

13. (SBU) During a March 31 coordination meeting with Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations, UN officials present relayed reports they had received from serving soldiers and officers on leave from the front that soldiers had fired on escaping

civilians. According to the reports the soldiers remain concerned about suicide bombers disguised as civilians fleeing the conflict zone and had orders to use their own judgment when escaping civilians might pose a threat. As a result of these loose rules of engagement soldiers, at times, had fired on civilians fleeing the conflict area. Post is attempting to set up a meeting with the source of these reports to verify their validity.

Food Aid Shipment Delayed

¶4. (SBU) UNICEF and UNHCR reported that the planned departure of the cargo ship "Dublin" with 1000MT of food aid and other material was delayed last night (March 31). The U.N. hopes to get clearance for the ship to depart tonight (April 1).

UNHCR Welcomes Positive Developments at IDP Sites

¶5. (U) UNHCR issued a press release on March 31 welcoming GSL initiatives to start the process of releasing IDPs with special needs (371 elderly persons have been released to date). The statement also noted that the GSL was beginning the process of facilitating visits by relatives of IDPs to the sites. While praising certain GSL initiatives, UNHCR also called for unhindered

access at the Omanthai screening center, greater freedom of movement for IDPs and the demilitarization of camps in Vavuniya and Mannar. Additionally, UNHCR called for the prompt registration of camp residents to speed their release to potential host families. (Note: the government is currently in the process of registering and providing ID cards to the IDPs. Minister for Human Rights Samarasinghe stated on March 31 that once camp residents were registered freedom of movement for IDPs would improve. The Minister also publicly confirmed that the Ministry of Resettlement had taken over from the Army management of the camps.) UNHCR reports that the number of new arrivals to GSL-controlled territory since November 2008 now stands at 57,412.

GSL Agrees to establish IDP Camps Away from Vavuniya

¶6. (SBU) In an important breakthrough, the GSL has agreed to the longstanding UN and donor suggestion that it allow IDP camps to be established away from Vavuniya. The head of a local NGO who attended a March 30 meeting with Basil Rajapaksa briefed the Embassy that Basil had agreed to allow Sewalanka to build a new camp for IDPs in Pulmoddai, the same town where India has a medical team providing care for wounded and sick IDPs coming out of the safe zone. The initial camp capacity will have shelter for 2,000 families. Rajapaksa also was amenable to suggestions for additional camps to be established in Mannar and potentially Madhu, near Mannar.

UNHCR will fund these camps with help from Norway. (Comment: the GSL has resisted suggestions to allow camps away from Vavuniya, probably to maintain some military control over the camps. But serious overcrowding in Vavuniya, shortages of water, and steady donor pressure convinced the GSL to relax its restrictions. These new camps will also be further from the paramilitaries operating in Vavuniya and thus less vulnerable to possible threats from them.)

High-Profile LTTE Casualties

¶7. (U) The military announced that the LTTE leader's son Charles Anthony was injured in an Army attack north of Puthukudiiruppu (PTK) today (April 1). The military, citing intercepted LTTE communication, also announced that the LTTE's technical wing chief ¶S. Kirupakaran alias Madivalahan was confirmed killed following a confrontation with Sri Lankan security forces at the Mullaitivu battlefield recently.

Civilian Casualties and IDP Outflow

¶8. (SBU) Sources from within the LTTE-controlled area report 46 civilians were killed and 118 injured on March 31. (Note: Such

reports from Tamil sources cannot be confirmed and are frequently exaggerated.)

BLAKE